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ABSTRACT

To provide information on what innovations are considered to be desirable and promising in the improvement of education, this study analyzes the grant proposals submitted to the BankAmerica Foundation's Educational Initiatives Program from 1978 to 1980 in terms of technical and practical utility. The results of the study show that California educators view expansion of the curriculum as the most important need. Other areas identified as needing development include student time on task, academic skills and attitudes, and vocational skills and attitudes. Special interest needs, such as programs for superior students and those to help minority and handicapped individuals attain professional occupations, comprise the lowest identifiable priorities. Program implementation was most commonly achieved through hiring of personnel, including certified and noncertified staff, or specialists, and purchase of curricular materials. The findings suggest, then, that for practical improvement in education, the focus has yet to move to electronic systems. (Author/WD)

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EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR DISCRETIONARY FUNDING

Decreasing enrollments, declining test scores, and demands for accountability have forced school districts toward a "back to basics" curriculum. The priorities established by this movement make it exceedingly difficult for public schools to explore innovative solutions to the expressed concerns of schooling. The expressed concerns are legion. A recent cover story in one of the national magazines (Time, June 18, 1980), which was subtitled "The Multifaceted Crisis of America's Public Schools" identified the "... usual suspects in the learning crisis" as: the decline of the family, the influence of television, the disruption created by busing, the national policy of more schooling for all students and "(t)he conflicting demands upon the public school system, which is now expected not only to teach but to make up for past and present racial and economic injustices." (Time, 1980, p. 54).

While the demands placed on schools have increased in complexity and scope, tax revolutions and inflation have forced schools to retrench expenditures back to established and accepted methods of instruction. This retrenchment, coming at the same time as the advent of the "smart" machine in information technology (see for example the Los Angeles Times of June 21, 1980 "Compute Services About to Skyrocket", part 1-A, p. 2), places the schooling industry in the uncomfortable

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position of knowing that help is just around the corner, but being unable to justify the expenditures to explore the innovations becoming available.

Given this situation it would benefit both educators and technologists to know what innovations are considered to be desirable and promising in the improvement of education.

To provide this assessment the grant proposals submitted to the BankAmerica Foundation's Educational Initiatives Program 1978-1980 school year were analyzed in terms of technical and practical utility.

Program Description

The BankAmerica Foundation program, developed in conjunction with a committee of school district superintendents, was designed to encourage local initiative for the improvement of public education. Grant announcements, which were mailed to the 1135 school districts in California, indicated the grants were to be awarded in terms of demonstrated benefit to students and increased public support for education. To assist the local schools (and school districts) in developing grant applications, the Foundation identified five areas of particular interest. These areas were: (1) increase the actual learning time of pupils, (2) development of work skills and attitudes of pupils, (3) programs for excellence in the arts, sciences and humanities for superior students, (4) improve the access to professional occupations for minority, females, and

handicapped pupils, and (5) increase the involvement of the community in the improvement of education. These categories are sufficiently general to suggest that any identified need would be worthy of consideration. With respect to process the BankAmerica Foundation imposed only two restrictions: the grants were not to be applied toward capital improvements or salaries of present staff. Beyond these minimal restrictions, the school districts were free to identify needs which should be addressed and specify the processes to accomplish the needs.

Approximately 100 grants with a total value of one million dollars were to be awarded by the Foundation. This grant allocation provides a unique dimension to the needs assessment. In general, needs assessments have been developed on the basis of a survey which provides a "wish" list of desired improvements. In contrast, the procedure employed by the BankAmerica Foundation in evaluating the grant proposals, provides a set of innovations which are desirable, can be implemented, and show promise of immediate benefit.

Procedure

Of the 528 applications received by the Foundation, 96 were rejected for lack of technical qualifications (e.g. submitting more applications than allocated in terms of school district enrollment). The remaining 432 applications were analyzed in

terms of identified need and process of implementation on the basis of identified need and implementation.

The need categories were developed from the original list prepared by the Foundation. The process categories were developed by analyzing the submitted proposals for common approaches. Under classroom management are categorized grants to purchase computers, videotape equipment etc., School activities contains drama production equipment, school billboards, solar energy equipment for the school etc., Curriculum materials consists of textbooks and supplies. Non-certificated personnel included aides, senior citizens or the hiring of student workers. Travel included fieldtrips, transportation, food, lodging, and tickets. Specialists were individuals such as computer programmers, statisticians, or project directors/coordinators.

Results

The tabulation of applications and average dollar amounts requested are shown in Table 1. It can be seen that the expansion of curriculum, which accounted for 24% of the proposals, is viewed by California educators as the most important need. The fact that this was the most commonly identified need is not surprising since this category encompasses new curricular offerings. Developing new courses is certainly a direct method of alleviating perceived deficiencies. The high frequency of this category indicates that California educators view the current offerings as a "bare bones" curriculum in need of being augmented. Procedures

TABLE I
RELATIVE FREQUENCY AND AVERAGE
DOLLAR AMOUNT OF SUBMITTED
APPLICATIONS IN TERMS OF
IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Implement- ation Needs	Classroom Management Support	School Activities Support	Staff Devel- opment	Curric- ular Materials	Utilization of			Travel Prog.	
					Certifi- cated Personnel	Non-Cert. Personnel	Consul- tants		
Expand Curriculum	3% 19,647	4% 15,372	2% 11,321	6% 10,334	4% 9,647	2% 14,069	1% 13,575	2% 10,177	24% \$12,854
Increase Pupil Time on Task	8% 14,982	1% 10,897	3% 12,467	2% 4,220	2% 17,861	2% 19,942	1% 16,721	<1% 31,250	18% \$14,542
Improve Academic Skills & Attitudes	5% 13,825	2% 11,315	2% 14,626	2% 19,852	2% 16,778	1% 13,020	1% 13,535	<1% 7,990	15% \$14,545
Improve Vocational Skills & Attitudes	3% 12,946	2% 13,871	2% 15,965	1% 11,962	1% 10,510	2% 14,192	1% 12,325	1% 21,672	12% \$14,088
Involve Community in School Activities	1% 11,500	2% 8,034	<1% 12,375	<1% 10,000	1% 8,487	3% 16,977	1% 19,343	1% 12,346	8% \$13,319
Enhance Programs for Superior Students	2% 12,664	1% 13,475	<1% 15,750	1% 8,800	<1% 16,330	1% 8,987	<1% 48,000	<1% 18,650	6% \$13,874
Develop Occupational and Professional Educational Opportunities for Minorities & Handicapped	1% 15,977	<1% 4,402	<1% 7,500	1% 8,750	<1% 14,050	<1% 10,125	Ø	Ø	3% \$10,726
Other Methods to Improve Education	1% 15,012	2% 11,385	4% 12,321	4% 4,500	2% 17,054	2% 10,975	1% 14,288	<1% 7,257	13% \$12,626
	23% \$14,884	15% \$12,308	13% \$12,962	13% \$10,749	12% \$13,505	12% \$14,495	7% \$16,352	5% \$15,092	13% \$13,604

to increase: student time on task; academic skills and attitudes; and vocational skills and attitudes accounted for 18%, 15%, and 12% of the proposals respectively. The last three identifiable areas were: increasing community involvement in public education, programs for superior students, and programs to aid minority and handicapped individuals obtain professional occupations, represented 8%, 6%, and 3% of the proposals respectively. Since these are special interest needs directed at specific populations it is reasonable that these categories would contain the fewest proposals. However, collectively these special interest proposals accounted for 17% of those received. The final category of 'other methods to improve education' contained all remaining grant applications.

The hiring of personnel, either certificated (12%), non-certificated (12%), or specialists (7%) collectively was the most commonly viewed means of implementing the proposed programs. Closely related to this category of hiring is staff development, which accounted for 13% of the proposals. Therefore, 44% of all applications received proposed to increase or improve the quality of educational staff.

The purchase of classroom management and support materials, e.g. mini-computers, videotape equipment, etc., was the single most frequently proposed process to satisfy perceived needs, accounting for 23% of all applications received. The purchase of materials for school-wide activities was specified in 15% of the proposals. Combined material purchases accounted for 38% of the submitted proposals.

The most frequently occurring need/process combination, which accounted for 8% of the proposals was to increase active time on task by means of purchasing classroom management and support supplies, particularly mini-computers.

The 432 applications of Table 1 were reviewed for technical completeness. The specific criteria were: demonstrated benefit to students, increased public support for education, evaluation plans, cost effectiveness and planning of the program. Based on this review 184 proposals were classified as above average in terms of technical planning. The distribution of these applications is shown in Table 2.

The Expansion of Curriculum continued as the most common need. However, proposals which dealt with increasing academic skills accounted for a proportionately greater percentage of applications than in the submitted group. Programs for superior students also increased their relative percentage.

TABLE II
RELATIVE FREQUENCY AND AVERAGE
DOLLAR AMOUNT OF TECHNICALLY QUALIFIED
APPLICATIONS IN TERMS OF
IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Implement- ation Needs	Classroom Management Support	School Activities Support	Staff Devel- opment	Curric- ular Materials	Certifi- cated Personnel	Utilization of Non-Cert. Personnel	Consult- ants	Travel Prog.	
Expand Curriculum	2% 13,985	4% 11,890	Ø	7% 8,905	5% 11,287	2% 13,683	1% 17,983	2% 12,486	23% \$11,638
Increase Pupil Time on Task	5% 18,131	1% 4,688	3% 8,730	3% 4,207	2% 22,932	2% 11,300	Ø	Ø	16% \$13,121
Improve Academic Skills & Attitudes	5% 15,298	2% 15,034	2% 19,360	3% 9,630	2% 23,450	2% 15,024	1% 9,440	1% 7,990	17% \$15,037
Improve Vocational Skills & Attitudes	1% 19,281	2% 10,114	1% 10,005	2% 16,991	1% 7,862	1% 10,973	1% 15,000	2% 23,340	10% \$14,813
Involve Community in School Activities	1% 10,500	2% 7,522	Ø	1% 10,000	2% 8,487	1% 17,376	2% 20,335	1% 2,538	8% \$11,623
Enhance Programs for Superior Students	2% 5,668	2% 10,725	1% 11,500	2% 10,861	1% 16,331	Ø	Ø	1% 18,650	9% \$11,204
Develop Occupational and Pro- fessional Educational Opportunit- ies for Minorities & Handicap- ped	1% 14,280	Ø	Ø	1% 2,500	1% 14,050	1% 12,263	Ø	Ø	3% \$1,568
Other Methods to Improve Education	2% 19,175	2% 14,980	4% 14,000	Ø	2% 10,803	2% 10,135	2% 5,647	1% 7,257	14% \$12,310
	18% \$15,070	15% \$11,415	10% \$12,847	17% \$8,974	15% \$14,215	12% \$12,817	5% \$13,835	7% \$15,261	12% \$12,803

The applications were then reviewed by school district superintendents for practical value in terms of: value of the program, demonstrated benefit to students and developing public support for education. As a result of this evaluation 94 applications were selected for funding. The distribution of these grants is shown in Table 3. Note that expansion of the curriculum remained the most frequently occurring grant, followed closely by grants which increase academic skills. In regard to processes, the most commonly funded grants were those which would purchase curriculum materials, followed by the hiring of certificated personnel.

TABLE III
RELATIVE FREQUENCY AND AVERAGE
DOLLAR AMOUNT OF GRANTS
AWARDED IN TERMS OF
IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Implement- ation Needs	Classroom Management Support	School Activities Support	Staff Devel- opment	Curric- ular Materials	Utilization of			Travel Prog.	
					Certifi- cated Personnel	Non-Cert. Personnel	Consult- ants		
Expand Curriculum	1% 8,270	3% 6,500	Ø	10% 6,864	4% 14,503	1% 14,500	1% 14,850	Ø	20% \$9,311
Increase Pupil Time on Task	3% 14,950	Ø	1% 2,800	3% 4,732	2% 10,065	2% 12,500	Ø	Ø	12% \$9,725
Improve Academic Skills & Attitudes	5% 10,375	3% 10,045	1% 1,000	2% 7,075	2% 29,805	4% 11,033	Ø	1% 7,990	19% \$11,605
Improve Vocational Skills & Attitudes	Ø	2% 10,172	1% 5,010	1% 13,922	1% 4,780	2% 10,973	1% 15,000	1% 24,500	10% \$11,722
Involve Community in School Activities	1% 10,500	2% 6,720	Ø	1% 10,000	2% 4,030	Ø	Ø	1% 2,538	7% \$6,363
Enhance Programs for Superior Students	1% 6,670	3% 13,633	Ø	3% 9,481	2% 16,331	Ø	Ø	2% 18,650	12% \$13,270
Develop Occupation- al and Pro- fessional Educational Opportunit- ies for Minorities & Handicap- ped	Ø	Ø	Ø	1% 2,500	2% 14,050	Ø	Ø	Ø	3% \$10,200
Other Methods to Improve Education	3% 19,175	3% 14,980	2% 13,575	Ø	2% 9,955	4% 11,094	1% 2,940	1% 7,257	17% \$12,756
	15% \$12,835	17% \$10,579	5% \$7,192	21% \$7,450	18% \$13,604	14% \$11,535	3% \$10,920	6% \$13,264	\$11,535

Discussion

Comparisons of the data in Tables 1,2, and 3 indicate the most popular need for school districts is curriculum expansion. It is of some interest to note that while curriculum expansion represents a relatively steady percentage of the needs (21% to 20%); the dollar amount requested declined by 27% (from \$12,854 to \$9,311). This would suggest the more expensive implementations particularly in the areas of classroom management support services, school activities, and travel were not judged to be as technically proficient or desirable as investments in curricular materials and personnel. In particular funding of certificated personnel to develop or refine curricular offerings was an appealing expenditure.

One of the major goals of the BankAmerica Foundation Program of Educational Initiatives was directed toward increasing active learning time as a means to enhance achievement. Eighteen percent of the submitted grant applications addressed this particular need while only 12% of the final awards were allocated to the category. A second category of interest were programs designed for superior student enrichment which accounted for 6% of the initial applications, but doubled to 12% in the grants awarded. The remaining three targeted goals pertaining to vocational skills and attitudes, community involvement, and minority and handicapped access to professional opportunities remained relatively constant.

It is of some interest to note that 47% of the original applications and 44% of the allocated grants were directed toward the targeted goals of the Foundation. This would suggest the additionally defined goals, in particular curriculum expansion and programs designed to improve academic skills and attitudes which jointly accounted for 39% of both applications and grants should be viewed as important "needs" for the School Districts of California.

Analysis of the processes designed to satisfy the specified goals indicate that the introduction of classroom management support services (primarily micro processors) was the most popular method (21%), it accounted for only 15% of the funded grants. The utilization of consultants were identified in 7% of the applicants and 3% of the funded grants. Considered jointly, since most of the specialists were to be utilized for activities related to classroom management, these findings would suggest the practical utility of electronics in the classroom is open to question. The two areas of implementation which increased in importance during the evaluation process were curricular materials (from 13% to 21%) and utilization of certificated personnel (from 12% to 18%). These findings would suggest that for practical improvement in education the focus is still on curricular materials refined and modified to fit the local situation.

Summary

The BankAmerica Foundation Educational Initiatives Program was desogned to encourage local school districts in the development of innovations designed to improve educational achievemnet. Since the program was targeted toward general goals of public education, it was assumed that an analysis of the submitted applications would provide a measure of the identified needs of school districts.

Analysis of the data suggests the most popular need of California school districts is curriculum expansion for all pupils. Essentially the expansion is designed to enrich and enlarge the curriculum beyond the basics of communication and computation skills into literature, science, artistic and creative endeavors, and the like. The major avenues proposed to develop these desirable needs are purchase of curricular materials and modification of existing materials by presently employed teachers and support personnel.

A secondary finding was the relative lack of interest in the present "state of the art" electronic systems as solutions to the needs of education.